

Rebels & Friends

L I B R A R Y.



THE FANEUIL HALL ADDRESS.

To the People of the United States:—

In pursuance of the custom of the American people to confer freely with one another in times of civil emergency, and the example of our own ancestors to speak to their fellow-citizens from this place, we have been commissioned by the citizens this day assembled in Faneuil Hall to address you upon the state of public affairs.

We claim no peculiar right to be heard, even by reason of the sacredness of the spot from which we speak; but the greatness of the exigency, the critical questions your representatives in Congress will soon be required to meet, and the singular unanimity which appears among the patriotic people in this portion of our land, lead us to hope for your attention and consideration.

To remove obstructions which we know may be artfully thrown in the way, we wish to say to you in advance,—as matter of honor between citizens—that this meeting and this address have not been prompted by any organization, or by any purpose of party or personal politics. They are the spontaneous expression of the convictions of men in earnest, who have differed much in times past, and may be separated again in their political action, but who are forced to a common opinion on the present exigency of affairs.

That we may wisely consider our rights and duties, understand whom and what we have to deal with, and the probabilities of the future, we must ask you to review with us the ground, however familiar it may seem to be.

For thirty years and more, Southern society has been moving steadily in an opposite direction from our own, until its entire system, and—if we may call it so—its civilization, has become hostile to, and, at last,

inconsistent with our own. In their progress, the southern people had reached a position where it may be said to have become their settled doctrine, social and political, that the people of color are—not by accident and temporarily, but by nature and forever—unfit for any other condition than that of absolute slaves. On several millions of such persons,—not all negroes, but in whom is much white blood, with often but a quarter or an eighth of the African—their social fabric rested. When not aggressive, their system was entrenched behind State institutions, where no national authority could reach it. From this condition of things, there followed consequences of the utmost social and political importance to the government and people of the Republic. Slavery, with its effects on what would otherwise have been the laboring class of whites, resulted in a system which is substantially oligarchical. It gave to the masters the advantages of oligarchy, and trained them personally in its habits, sentiments and passions. Slavery and oligarchy do not rest on political economy, but have their sources in the pride and passions of men. They are, therefore, if circumstances at all favor them, an ever-present danger. The Southern people came to consider themselves as moulded, by their training and position, into a master race, not only over their slaves, but in their relations with their fellow-citizens of the free States, whose political equality and free labor they had come to despise. To support their system, in national politics, they invented and used, as a most effectual weapon, the dogma of State Supremacy, which they disguised under the name of State Rights. It may, therefore, be fairly said that three ideas had complete possession of Southern society,—Slavery, Aristocracy and State Supremacy. Upon these, they carried on

their political warfare, until 1860. On these, they founded their empire in 1861. On these, and for those, they have waged against the Republic for our years, a war of stupendous proportions.

That we may understand the character of this antagonistic force, with which we have now to deal politically, we ask you to remember what they accomplished. They made no insurrection of professed citizens for a redress of grievances. They made no revolution or civil war within an admitted sovereignty. They set up a distinct and independent sovereignty, within the territory of the Republic. This extended over eleven States, and we hardly saved our capital; while in the States of Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri, the most the nation obtained at first, was a declaration of sovereign neutrality. Looking at the fact, and not at right or law, we must remember that the rebellion drove out from its usurped borders every representative and obliterated every sign of Federal authority, possessed every foot of ground, and established and put in operation a central government, completed in all its parts, legislative, executive and judicial. It is true, the rebels preserved the form of a republic, but they might have made their government a monarchy. They did as they chose. It happened that they preserved their State lines, and made few changes in their State constitutions; but they might have obliterated both, and resolved themselves into a consolidated empire. They did as they saw fit. They then demanded recognition of us, and of the rest of the world, raised armies and a navy, and forced the issue of war. We had only to decline the issue of war, and the rebel government would have stood forth, a completed, recognized empire.

In the course of a war of four years, for the restoration of the Republic, we must not forget that not one place surrendered from political considerations. There were individual deserters, but not a regiment laid down its arms from motives of returning loyalty. They fought to the last,—as bitterly at last as ever,—and were surrendered by their commanders only when there was no other resource. It was by force, that their government was broken down. It is by force, that the territory they held is now in our military occupation. They admit themselves overpowered by superior numbers and material resources, but we are not aware that the admission extends any further. Military organizations against the Republic are not practicable; but they are seeking to open, and with the least possible delay, the avenues to their old fields of political contest and ascendancy. They will endeavor to save all they can of the doctrine of State Supremacy for future use. In the permission for the return of the Rebel Legislature to Richmond, and in the Sherman-Johnston pacification, our government barely escaped a serious, if not a fatal political defeat, at the hands of a vanquished enemy. The purpose of the South now is to resume the exercise of State functions with

the utmost possible speed, and with the least possible change in their home systems. To secure that, they will do and submit to whatever is necessary. It must constantly be borne in mind that when once a State is admitted to its place, the power of the nation over all subjects of State cognizance is gone. If the dogma of State Supremacy is not destroyed, for practice as well as in theory, the war will have been in vain. It has not only been the favorite weapon of slavery, but has been eagerly caught up by the enemies of our institutions in Europe,—the tenet, that the United States is not a nation, a government, a sovereignty,—that the citizens owe to it no direct allegiance,—that they cannot commit against it the crime of treason, if they carry with them into their treason the forms of State authority. *The right of this republic to be a sovereign, among the sovereignties of the earth, must be put beyond future dispute, abroad as well as at home.* We have paid the fearful price, and we must not be defrauded of the results.

Let us now, fellow-citizens, look at the dangers which attend an immediate restoration of the rebel States to the exercise of full State authority. Slavery is the law of every rebel State. In some of these States free persons of color are not permitted to reside; in none of them have they the right to testify in court, or to be educated, in few of them to hold land, and in all of them they are totally disfranchised. But, far beyond the letter of the law, the spirit of the people and the habits of generations are such as to insure the permanence of that state of things, in substance. If slavery should be abolished in form, their spirit and habits, their pride and passions, will lead them to uphold their oligarchical system, built upon a debased colored population, and intrenched behind State institutions, over which the nation cannot pass in peace. Their personal relation with the colored people as masters over slaves being changed in law, they will look upon them in a new light, as a class to be feared, and as the cause of their defeat and humiliation. They will not tax themselves to give to the freedmen an education. They will not permit the continuance within their States of philanthropic agencies for colored people, from the free States. They will not encourage Northern immigration, with systems of small freeholds and free labor; nor will capital and labor go there from the free States under present auspices. Returning to their old arts of polities, which they are fond of, and in which long practice has made them expert, they will seek to repudiate a debt incurred for the suppression of their revolt; nor can we shut our eyes to the danger of political combinations, to be ruled by this oligarchy and to do its work. It is useless to suggest or conjecture methods and means; the spirit and motive will take such forms as occasions may require.

We trust it cannot be necessary to pause here and refute a political fallacy, which the logic of events

has already exposed. It has been contended that, forcible resistance having ceased, the rebel States are, by that fact, again in their orbits, and in the rightful possession and exercise of all their functions as States, in local and national affairs, just as if no war had taken place,—that the nation, whether by Congress or the Executive, has no option to exercise, no powers or rights to enforce, no conditions that it can make. We trust that the mere statement of this proposition, in the light of the circumstances in which we stand, is a sufficient refutation. We are holding the rebel country in military occupation, and the nation is asserting a right, before it yields that occupation, to see the public safety secured, and the public faith preserved. The only question can boast to the mode of obtaining this result. We trust all loyal people of the land will have no hesitation in standing by the President, with clear convictions, as well as strong purpose, on this issue. By necessity, the Republic must hold and exercise some control over these regions and people until the States are restored to their full functions as States, in national as well as in State affairs. This authority is to be exercised by the President or by Congress, or both, according to the nature of each case. Though resulting, necessarily, from the fact of the war, these powers are not necessarily to be exercised by military persons or in military forms. This temporary, provisional authority, although supreme for the time, may be exercised, much of it, by civil officers, using the methods of civil power, and admitting the employment of judicial and executive functions, with the arts and business and social intercourse of life. This we understand to be, in substance, the position which the government now occupies, and we believe the people recognize it to be of necessity and of right.

Let us now, fellow-citizens, turn our attention to our rights and duties. Having succeeded in this war, and holding the rebel States in our military occupation, it is *our right and duty to secure whatever the public safety and the public faith require.*

First. The principle must be put beyond all question, that the Republic has a direct claim upon the allegiance of every citizen, from which no State can absolve him, and to his obedience to the laws of the Republic, "any thing in the constitution or laws of 'any State to the contrary notwithstanding.'

Second. The public faith is pledged to every person of color in the rebel States, to secure to them and their posterity forever a complete and veritable freedom. Having promised them this freedom, received their aid on the faith of this promise, and, by a successful war and actual military occupation of the country, having obtained the power to secure the result, we are dishonored if we fail to make it good to them.

Third. The system of slavery must be abolished and prohibited by paramount and irreversible law.

Throughout the rebel States, there must be, in the words of Webster, "impressed upon the soil itself 'an inability to bear up any but free men.'"

Fourth. The systems of the States must be truly "republican."

Unless these points are secured, the public faith will be broken, and there will be no safety for the public peace or the preservation of our institutions.

It must be remembered that, under the Constitution, most of these subjects are entirely matters of State jurisdiction. Once withdraw the powers of war, and admit a State to its full functions, and the authority of the nation over these subjects is gone. It is a State function to determine who shall hold land, who shall testify in State courts, who shall be educated, and how, who shall labor, and how, and under what contracts or obligations and how enforced, and who shall vote in national as well as in State elections. We have already said that all these points now stand in the constitutions and laws of the rebel States decided against the freedmen. Action is necessary to put them right. So great a change is, no doubt, fundamental, and goes to the bottom of their social and political system. If it is not made now, before civil society becomes settled, before the States are restored to the exercise of all their powers, it will never be made, in all human probability, by peaceful means.

The question now occurs, how are these results to be secured, before those States are permitted to resume their functions? We agree that these results ought to be secured in confreruity with what may be called the American System,—that upon which and for which our Constitution was made. This is a system of separate States, each with separate functions, constituted by the people of each, and self-governing within its sphere, with a central State constituted by the people of all, supreme within its sphere, and the final judge of its sphere and functions. The President recognizes the importance of proceeding in accordance with this system. He aims at a restoration of the States, by the people of the States, without resort to the exercise of sovereign legislative jurisdiction over them by the general government. In this we offer to him our sympathy, as we ask for him an intelligent support. But, inasmuch as once scattered, the State will be beyond our reach, the utmost care must be taken to avoid a hasty and unsatisfactory restoration. We acknowledge that there may be dangers in protracted and extensive military occupation. But we believe that the people are willing to incur their share of these perils. We believe the people feel that the greatest hazard is in premature restoration fraught with future danger. Any restoration would be dangerous which did not secure, beyond all reasonable peril, the abolition of slavery, actual freedom, just rights to the free, and, within each State, "a republican form of government."

The President and his Cabinet, we have every reason to believe, have these results in view. We cannot doubt that Congress will refuse to receive any State upon any other terms. If there are any members of Congress whose fidelity on these points is doubtful, we implore you to exercise over them all the just authority and influence of constituents.

We advance no extreme or refined theory as to what may be included within the term "a republican form of government." In the exercise of the extraordinary prerogative of the General Government to determine whether a State constitution is "republican," there must be practical wisdom and no refined theories. If the constitutions with which the rebel States now come are not "republican," in such a reasonable and practical sense as nations act upon—if they are so far unreplican as to endanger public peace and the stability of our institutions, then we may treat them as not "republican" in the American sense of the term.

What, then, is the character of their present constitutions, assuming that slavery is prohibited? Here presents itself no question of mere principle or theory, but facts of an overruling and decisive character. From one third to one half of their free population are absolutely and forever not only disfranchised, but deprived of all the usual rights of citizens in a republic. Not only so, but this disfranchisement is perpetual, hereditary and insurmountable. It is more deeply seated than Oriental caste. It clings to each man and his posterity forever, if there be a traceable thread of African descent. No achievements in war or peace, no acquisitions of property, no education, no mental power or culture, no merits, can overcome it. To make the case worse, these people are not only disfranchised, but the temper, spirit and habits of the ruling class, the only class partaking of civil authority, will keep them not only disfranchised, but uneducated, without land, without the right to testify, and without the means of protecting their formal freedom. The result has been and must ever be, that the system is essentially and practically oligarchical, in such a sense as actually and seriously to endanger the public peace and the success of our republican institutions.

Attempts are made to embarrass the subject by referring to several of the free States, whose constitutions restrict free blacks in the exercise of some of the usual rights of citizens. But these are not practical questions before the country. The general government has no present cognizance of those questions in those States. Besides, as we have said, the exercise of this extraordinary authority must be upon practical and reasonable grounds, and not on mere theory. The partial disfranchisement of people of color in those States we regard as one of the subtle effects of the slave power in our politics, which we hope to see pass away with its cause. The number of persons whom it bears upon is so small, the effect upon them so slight, and such the state of society,

and the habits and feelings of the people, that the substantial character of those States as "republican" is not sensibly affected. Departures from principle, however small, must always be regretted; but in the vast and critical affairs of nations, slight aberrations from exact principles are constantly occurring, and are constantly submitted to and allowed for, in fundamental institutions, as well as in occasional practice. The case of the rebel States is vastly and absolutely different. It presents a question of a false principle organized and brought into action, with vast dimensions, having already created one war, and all but destroyed the Republic, and ever threatening danger hereafter. We can hardly think it in good faith that the effort is made to deter the nation from confronting this vast peril, over which it has present and necessary jurisdiction, by invoking those slight causes found remaining in loyal States, over which the nation has no present cognizance, and from which it has nothing to fear.

We do not ask that the nation shall insist on an unconditioned, universal suffrage. We admit that States determine for themselves the principles upon which they will act, in the restrictions and conditions they place upon suffrage. All the States make restrictions of age, sex, and residence, and often annex other conditions operating in substance equally upon all, and reasonably attainable by all. Those matters lie within the region of advice from neighbors, and not of national authority. We speak only to the point where the national authority comes in. We cannot require the rebel States, if we treat them as States, to adopt a system, for the sole reason that we think it right. Of that, each State, acting as a State, must be the judge. But in the situation in which the rebel States now are, the nation can insist upon what is necessary to public safety and peace. And we declare it to be our belief that if the nation admits a rebel State to its full functions with a constitution which does not secure to the freedmen the right of suffrage in such manner as to be impartial and not based in principle upon color, and as to be reasonably attainable by intelligence and character, and which does not place in their hands a substantial power to defend their rights as citizens at the ballot-box, with the right to be educated, to acquire homesteads and to testify in courts, the nation will be recreant to its duty to itself and to them, and will incur and deserve to incur danger and reproach proportioned to the magnitude of its responsibility.

It should not be forgotten that, slavery being abolished, and therewith the three-fifths rule of the Constitution, nearly two millions will be added to the Representative population of the slave States in the apportionment for members of Congress and of votes in Presidential elections, and that this increase of political power to the rebel States must be at the expense of the free States. If the freedmen remain, as they now are, disfranchised, this increased power will be wielded by a class of voters

smaller in proportion than before. This furnishes an additional temptation to that class to retain it in their hands; and we shall be compelled to meet, as heretofore, the old spirit, not improved by its recent experience, and largely increased in its political power.

As we speak from a free State, it may be suggested that we are not so good judges of what should be done for the colored people of the South as those who have been brought up among them. It does not follow that those who have been brought up under an abuse are the best judges whether it shall be continued, or of what shall be substituted in its place. The people of the North have seen the colored races acting as freemen under free institutions, which the people of the South have not. They who have known the man of color only as a slave before his master, or sometimes as a disfranchised free man under a slave system embracing his race, are not the only nor necessarily the best qualified class to give an opinion as to what he may do or what should be done for him as a free man, under free systems. History teaches us that national emancipations do not emanate from the masters. And wherever emancipation has seemed to disappoint expectations, the difficulties are traceable, in large measures to persistent and multifarious counteractions by the late master-class.

Appeals may be made to taste or pride, on the subject of the social equality of the people of color. We must not permit our opinions to be warped by such considerations. The present question is strictly one of political justice and safety, and not of social equality. When the free man of color, educated in the common schools, deposits a vote which he can write himself, gives a deposition which he can read and sign, and pays a tax on the homestead he has bought, the law forces no comparisons between his intellectual, moral, physical or social condition, and that of the white citizen, of whatever race or nation, who lives, votes or testifies by his side.

But the nation has a deep interest in the freedmen, by themselves considered. The Republic must choose today between two results. The millions of people of color in the South, no small part of them carrying the best white blood in their veins, must be either an educated, industrious, landholding, arms-bearing, tax-paying, voting, self-protecting population; or an untaught, indolent, objectless, disfranchised, helpless and debased population,—the substratum of a proud, restless, unrepentant, political and social aristocracy. The President has undertaken, in certain of the rebel States, an experiment for speedy restoration. Recognizing the general policy and duty of restoration as soon as practicable, the experiment commands our earnest wishes for its success. By its success we mean—not the return of the States to their position; that they are only too ready to do; but their return *with constitutions in which the public safety and public faith shall be secured*. We cannot conceal our ap-

prehensions that the experiment will fail. But let not the Republic fail! The more recent signs are that the spirit which caused the war is preparing to fight over politically the ground it has lost in battle. This ought not to surprise us. Let no haste to restore a State, no fear of rebel dissatisfaction, lead the Republic to compromise its safety or its honor!

During the progress towards restoration, the nation holds the States in military occupation, by powers resulting necessarily from successful war. This hold upon them is to be continued until this or some other experiment does succeed. We need not be precipitate. The present authority, although resulting from war, may, as we have said, be largely exercised by civil methods and civil functionaries, and be accompanied with the enjoyment of many civil rights and local municipal institutions, executive and judicial. If the present experiment fails, we may try the experiment of building by the people from the foundation, by means of municipal institutions of towns and counties, with the aid of education, commerce and immigration, a new spirit being infused and the people becoming accommodated to their new relations, and so advance gradually to complete restoration.

This is but one suggestion. Various methods are open to us. Only let it be understood, that *there is no point at which the rebels can defy, politically, any more than they could in war, the authority of the Republic*. The end the nation has in view is the same as that for which the war was accepted and prosecuted,—*the restoration of the States to their legitimate relations with the Republic*. The condition of things calls for no limitations of time or methods. By whatever course of reasoning it may be reached, upon whatever doctrine of public law it may rest, however long may be the interval of waiting, and whatever may be the process resorted to, the friends and enemies of the Republic should alike understand, that it has the powers and will use the means to ensure a final restoration of the States, with constitutions which are republican, and with provisions that shall secure the public safety and the public faith.

Boston, June 31, 1865.

THEOPHILUS PARSONS,

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 the Address.

